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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000562

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: A KINDER, GENTLER ZANU-PF? NOT LIKELY

REF: A. HARARE 83 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. 04 HARARE 2035

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Speculation that an overwhelming ZANU-PF win in the Parliamentary elections, coupled with the recent party purges (ref A), would lead ZANU-PF to moderate its stance toward the opposition so far appears unfounded. Mugabe's public portrayal of the MDC has returned to a more vitriolic tone and the government-controlled press has stepped up articles highlighting purported MDC violence and Morgan Tsvangirai's ineffectiveness. Mugabe has stated publicly

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that repressive legislation will remain in place. The GOZ appears to be moving to take over or close down the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, which has been critical of the government. Violence against MDC supporters appears to be on the upswing, and a GOZ-appointed committee of auditors just released a report recommending that the MDC-led city council of Mutare be dissolved. END SUMMARY.

Rhetoric Heating Up Against Opposition

[1](#)2. (U) In contrast with the immediate pre-election period, when Mugabe moderated his rhetoric, he is reverting to portraying the MDC as a party of violence. At a press conference on April 2, Mugabe stated that the MDC must accept defeat in the parliamentary elections. Although in his post-election press conference he complimented the MDC for refraining from violence on the day of the election, saying that MDC's peaceful conduct should form the basis for future interactions between the two parties, Mugabe nonetheless reacted intemperately to a question on how the GOZ would respond to MDC plans to put pressure on the Government for a reversal of the elections. Mugabe said mass action is not the prerogative of one side, and would be met with a massive response. He said peaceful demonstrations are welcome but history has shown us that they (MDC) are a very violent people.

[1](#)3. (U) Emphasizing Mugabe's remarks about MDC's violence, the government-controlled Herald newspaper has run several articles about MDC supporters allegedly going on a violent rampage on April 4 following an illegal demonstration in Harare during which MDC supporters were reportedly handing out 'Reject Fraud' flyers. The Public Affairs Section, located in the area where the demonstrations were held, reports that they were peaceful demonstrations. The latest Herald article, on April 7, accused the MDC of using the flyers to create a panic over fuel and food shortages that did not exist. (COMMENT: the shortages do exist.) On April 6, the Herald ran a front-page headline 'Tsvangirai Must Go: UK', quoting an article in the UK Independent newspaper stating that Tsvangirai had proved himself an ineffectual leader. (The article in the Independent actually stated only that Tsvangirai is expected to face calls to step down.) The Herald has subsequently run cartoons depicting Tony Blair telling Tsvangirai 'Your time, up! Get out!'

Repressive Legislation Remains in Place

[1](#)4. (U) In an interview with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Mugabe said that the much criticized Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) would not be repealed. To date, the GOZ has closed four newspapers and arrested several journalists under AIPPA. Two British journalists are currently facing charges under AIPPA for practicing journalism without accreditation after being arrested while one was taking a photograph near a polling station during the March 31 elections. The journalists face two years in prison if convicted.

Police Actions Against MDC

15. (SBU) Reportedly sought for arrest in connection with demonstrations by MDC youth in downtown Harare earlier in the week, MDC Youth Chairman Nelson Chamisa turned himself in to police on April 7. He has been charged with inciting public violence. He was released on bail on April 9. The official media has reported the arrests of 18 MDC supporters in connection with the demonstrations.

Siege of Cities Continues

16. (U) Continuing a pattern of harassment against MDC-led mayors and city councils (ref B), the Herald reported on April 6 the release of a report by a committee of auditors appointed by the GOZ to investigate allegations of mismanagement and corruption by the MDC-dominated Mutare city council. According to the Herald, the committee recommended suspension of the full council and further investigation into the allegations.

Unions Under Attack?

17. (C) Four unions that form part of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) on April 6 called for a change of leadership based on allegations of financial misappropriation and objections to ZCTU President Lovemore Matombo and 1st Vice President Lucia Matibenga not holding active jobs. Raymond Majongwe, Chairperson of Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe and a member of the ZCTU General Council, told us April 8 that he believes that the complaints are driven by ZANU-PF aligned members of the four unions and that this is a government plot to cripple the organization. By law, the Labor Minister can investigate claims of financial impropriety. The AFL-CIO,s Solidarity Center representative told us he believes that the government will use the internal conflict as a pretext to force ZCTU to hold new elections and potentially bar particular individuals from holding office.

Violence Reportedly on the Upswing

18. (C) In contrast with the period of relatively less violence before the elections, there are a growing number of reports in the independent media and by the MDC of violence by ZANU-PF supporters against MDC supporters. Most commonly the reports are of actions against relatively isolated supporters in rural areas where ZANU-PF is in the majority. (Morgan Tsvangirai told us last week that ZANU-PF is still afraid to use force in areas where it knows it is in a minority.) Zim Online reported on April 7 that 45 MDC supporters in Gwanda were beaten and told they would no longer be allowed to buy grain from the Grain Marketing Board. The MDC reported that, in one incident in Insiza April 3, a police officer arrested supporters of the ZANU-PF candidate for attacking MDC supporters; however, when they arrived at the police station, the member in charge released them. On April 10, the Zimbabwe Standard reported that ZANU-PF supporters burned down the house of the MDC campaign manager for Lupane. The MDC has reported several other attacks and of property being burned. Human Rights NGOs told us that they are still trying to confirm and to quantify the reported escalation in violence. The British Embassy told us that one of their election-related contacts from a rural area was forced to flee to Harare and is in hiding after being accused of being a British spy for talking to the Embassy.

19. (C) COMMENT: ZANU-PF's tough posture in the wake of its landslide "victory" reflects the party leadership's confidence in regional acquiescence to the electoral results, its insecurity toward its domestic public, and its traditional methods, as well as Mugabe,s oft-declared disdain for and determination to eliminate all forms of democratic dissent. We expect the ruling party to press ahead quickly with constitutional amendments but to avoid any political or economic reforms that might signal a kinder, gentler face to its domestic critics, even if it tries to sell a softer image to the international community in an effort to secure desperately needed economic support.
Dell